

Called, Gifted, and Sent

Rick Peterson

Luke 9:1-6

Even a cursory reading of the Gospels reveal that Jesus and His apostles preached the kingdom of God, cast out demons, healed the sick, and raised the dead. In Jesus Christ, the power of the kingdom of God was present in word and in deed. Tragically, this stands in direct contrast to the lack of preaching and power displayed within the American church. Today, neither the preaching of the kingdom of God nor healing and deliverance is common. Why is this? I will address that question later in this sermon. I want to show you that Jesus came to inaugurate His kingdom in this present age, and that salvation includes both personal transformation and, yes, physical healing. I want to convince you that Jesus came into the world not to simply convey information, but to make people whole. Do you know that God desires that you be whole? That is to say, do you know that Christ came to redeem you from a state of the deception and brokenness, and to deliver you into a state of wholeness?

What I want you to know is that God sent His Son into the world to do more than provide a formula for post-mortem salvation; Christ came to rescue you from this present evil age in the now, and to give you a new identity in Him, a new purpose for living, and a new hope for the future (Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 1:3-14; Revelation 21:1-8). The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation for lost and broken people, and not just good information to be marketed to so-called, spiritual seekers. In this sermon, I want to exhort you to look to Christ and His power for salvation, healing, and deliverance. And I want you to understand why His power is missing within the modern American church so that you can pray for repentance and revival.

Theological Systems and Business Models

Preaching the kingdom of God *and* healing the sick: That was the way of Christ, and the way of the apostles. But why is it not the way of the modern church? One reason is that two of the most dominant systems of theology in America place no emphasis upon these things. Reformed theology stresses predestination and forensic justification by faith alone, often to the exclusion of other foundational doctrines. The other dominant system, classic Dispensationalism, by far the most prominent system of theology within evangelicalism, has historically dismissed

the kingdom of God altogether, placing it in a future millennium, and for those of Jewish decent alone. Some even teach that the Sermon on the Mount is not for Gentile Christians! Then there is the business model of the church which has become so popular in recent decades with its seeker sensitivity and emphasis on “churching” the unchurched. It is a wonder any genuine ministry is occurring anywhere within North America.

But wherever these systems, along with the business model of church are rejected in favor of a genuine New Testament emphasis on a believer’s church within which the sufficiency of Christ and His kingdom are preached, the Lord Jesus is still saving, healing, and bringing deliverance to lost souls. Those churches which still stress that every word of God is for every believer to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the power of His kingdom is still on display. So today I am emphasizing the good news found in the Gospel of Luke regarding the preaching and healing ministry of Jesus which He delegated to His Church.

Now, when I speak of healing, I am speaking of that which is commonly prescribed within the New Testament. I am not advocating for faith healing spectacles such as occur among the religious charlatans of our day. I realize there are many fine believers who suffer from debilitating illnesses and conditions. Nonetheless, we have to preach God’s word, and not our present experience. So, what I want you to hear is that the New Testament is more than a record of propositional truths; rather, it is a message enlivened by the Holy Spirit which presents Truth as a Person, Jesus Christ, and healing as the primary effect of His teaching.

Jesus said His words were “spirit and they were life” (John 6:63). When He spoke, life was imparted, true life, healing life. We cannot control upon whom faith to be healed is granted any more than we can control upon whom the grace of God moves bringing regeneration and salvation, but we can preach the word of God, and your New Testament is clear that Jesus came to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.

When Jesus announced His Messianic mission at Nazareth, He did not hand out copies of His Messianic credentials or a manifesto. Jesus wasn’t recruiting scholars; He was declaring deliverance. Jesus came to save and restore His people, often from among the dregs of society; the broken, the moral outcasts, the prostitutes and tax-collectors. Jesus came to call sinners to repentance. Indeed, the only group Jesus said He had not come to save was the righteous (Matthew 9:13). Therefore, when Jesus announced His mission, He quoted the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah, which proclaimed that the Spirit of the LORD was upon Him *both* to preach

and to heal (Luke 4:18-19; Isaiah 61:1-2a). To miss Jesus as a healer is to miss half of His ministry. Let's look closer.

Later, when John sent His messengers to determine whether Jesus was “the Coming One” or whether they should look for another, Jesus again, did not list his teaching credentials, nor provide a carefully prepared synopsis of His doctrine, rather, He set forth the effects of both His preaching *and* healing ministry. And in order to highlight this glorious truth, Luke prefaces our Lord's words with his own commentary, saying, “And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight,” and then Luke tell us Jesus told the messengers of John: “Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Luke 7:22).

Go and tell John the things you have seen *and* heard. Does anyone in America have that testimony about their church? If a neighbor asks how the Sunday service was, would any believer today respond, “I saw the lame walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead raised and the poor having the good news of God's care and provision peached to them.” Did you catch that? “Seen and heard.” Not only did the messengers of John hear heaven sent doctrine taught, they saw the effects of that doctrine upon those who heard and believed. And those effects were tangible, those effects were measurable to the degree that one could report back to another what they had seen and heard. Again, this was not exceptional, it was the ordinary effects of our Lord's ministry — He taught and the result of that teaching was healing from the inside-out. Do you know that Christ heals you from the inside-out? He teaches the only truth that can save, and that salvation reaches way down deep inside the human soul and roots out the deadly sin nature and the natural consequence of that work has a healing effect on the entirety of the person who believes.

Listen please, let me say it again, Christ did not come to provide you information on how to go to heaven, but to bring heaven to earth, in the now, to be fully realized in the future to be sure, but nonetheless to be experienced in the now, as well. Recently, in Luke's narrative, we read of our Lord calming a storm; He then brought deliverance to a demoniac; He healed a woman of a hopeless bleeding condition, and then restored life to dead girl. All these were hopeless situations, but not for the Lord of Hope. The Messianic ministry Jesus announced at Nazareth was in full blossom throughout Galilee and the surrounding region. People were being

made whole. The Lord of Wholeness was come to His people. What would be next? The expansion of that ministry — meaning, the replication of the Spirit’s powerful anointing within the ministry of the twelve disciples.

Jesus Sends the Twelve

The anointing of the Spirit of the LORD belongs to Jesus of Nazareth, alone. That anointing brings deliverance as well as the proclamation of good news. And we believe the Scripture, when it declares, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). There has never been a time in which Jesus stopped preaching and healing, and since Pentecost, He has done so through His church. This means the locus for preaching and healing today remains His body, the church. If you are born of the Spirit, and united to Christ by the Spirit and baptized in water, you are a member His body, the church, then the ministry of Jesus continues today in you.

The beginnings of this grand truth we discover in our text: “Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” Three key words: Called. Gifted. Sent. The power and authority to preach and heal are delegated to those whom He called, and it was not theirs to do with as they would; instead, they were to go as representatives of Christ into the world. We see this principle played out in Acts chapter three. Peter and John had gone to the temple, and to the marvel of the crowd, Peter had healed a man who had been lame from birth:

¹² So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, **as though by our own power or godliness** we had made this man walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *Him* go. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which *comes through Him* has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all (Acts 3:12-16, Emphasis mine).

It was Jesus who had healed this man, through Peter, and the faithful disciple was quick to point out that it was not by his own piety or power. Later, Peter and John were arrested for preaching *and* healing at the temple, and the same religious hierarchy that had killed Jesus, was now threatening the disciples. Spirit-empowered preaching has never been popular with the

religious elite, and it is not popular today. Once again, Peter made the point clear to the religious leaders, saying,

Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole (Acts 4:8-10).

Peter spoke truth to the authorities; he didn't seek an alliance with them. Peter did not consider how to redefine the ministry of Christ in order to make it acceptable to the rulers. All the faithful throughout church history have preached and healed in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and not in their own name. And rulers, both civil and religious, have opposed the ministry of Christ just as they opposed Peter and John that day. Every aspect of true ministry belongs to Jesus Christ. It is faith in Him alone that saves and heals, and never faith in celebrity pastors or religious gurus, or the civil authorities. As Peter declared, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

So, the ministry of believers is a delegated ministry, and this means the church is a people sent into the world, just as Jesus was sent by the Father; "As the Father sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). Called. Gifted. Sent. That defines the ministry of every believer. Do you realize you are sent? There are, of course, people who are not sent, as the old preacher once asked an evangelist, "Are you sent, or did you just went?" Some people just went, they are not sent. They are self-promoters. Their "ministry" is all about them, and not Jesus Christ. Paul spoke of self-centered preachers, telling the Philippians, "For all seek their own, not the things of which are of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:21). Such people speak a worldly wisdom, as James calls it, a wisdom which is "earthly, sensual, demonic. . ." they walk in "envy and self-seeking" creating "confusion and every evil thing" (James 3:15). We've all seen and heard of these preachers and charlatans, these authoritarian leaders. They are neither called, nor gifted, nor sent by Christ, and their day of judgment is coming (Matthew 7:21-23).

But such earthly wisdom is contrasted by that which is spoken by those truly sent by the Lord. These speak a heavenly wisdom, a wisdom which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (3:17). Those genuinely sent by Christ are also peacemakers, sowing "the fruit of righteousness" (3:18).

So, our text tells us those sent by Christ are called disciples, who operate in a delegated authority from Jesus, and they are sent by Him into the world. We must understand that ours is a heaven-sent gospel, it is not contrived by men. And we must first detach from ways of the world if we are going to walk in the ways of the Lord. Tragically, this is a principle that has often been lost on the church.

The State-Church Alliance

In stark contrast to the faithfulness of Peter and John, is what author Leonard Verduin calls, “The Constantinian Change,” referring to 313 A. D., when the church allied itself with the Roman state and its emperor. When this occurred, the result was the local church of the called, gifted, and sent disappeared into the wider morass of a institutional Roman structure with its sacramentalism, and eventually, its popery. What followed came to be know as the dark ages, for good reason. During these centuries, the light of the gospel was eclipsed, as those who held to the New Testament vision of the church went underground to survive. Luther and the Reformation offered hope to these believers, and Luther’s reforms were at first considered a light after darkness, but this season was short. It wasn’t long before the rulers and elders of Luther’s day were allowed to redefine the Reformation in terms acceptable to them.

Instead of restoring the church of the called, gifted, and sent who go about preaching of the kingdom of God and healing, the Reformers conceded once again to a Constantinian model of a state-church structure into which all of society, believers and unbelievers alike were enfolded into the church through infant baptism. On this point, the Reformation changed nothing. Now there were Protestant and Catholic state churches, and the nominalism such an alliance bred. Within a generation of Luther’s protest, the only light related to the Reformation was that coming from the fires of mass burnings of genuine believers who refused to submit to the Catholic, and now, the Reformers vision of a state church. Those who held to the New Testament vision of the church were also beheaded and drowned at the hands of both Catholic and Protestant clergymen and rulers. Men, women, and children suffered horrific persecution for simply wanting to live and worship as the New Testament commanded.

It ought not be lost on us that our Lord warned of a day when those who kill His followers will think they do service to God (John 16:2). As late as the mid-seventeenth century, persecutions at the hands of the state church continued throughout Europe. The main point is the

state-church is the world's church. It acts in accord with the world's ways and values. And it is the failure of the church to detach from the ways of the world which destroys the preaching of the kingdom of God and the healing of souls and bodies.

Indeed, whenever and wherever the church allies itself with the state, the results is a monstrous entity which stands in direct opposition to the truth of the gospel. This is why the Christian "Right" or "Left" in the United States is in truth, something less than Christian. It may not be an official state-church like that of Europe or Canada, but its effects are the same. When Christian ally themselves with political figures and movements, the agenda and purposes are that of legislation within the state structure, and not proclaiming the kingdom of God and healing. Jesus could have been a Zealot, but chose not to be; indeed, He called a local to leave that movement and follow Him, instead.

What Luther created in conceding to a church which enfolded all of society, was what we would call today, a "Seeker Sensitive" church. Luther's church model, and that of the modern church growth movement are very close. And each have the same devastating effect on the community of faith. The gospel of the kingdom of God ceases to be preached for fear of offense, and the healing ministry of the church degrades into mere social work. Worship becomes entertainment, and clergy become motivational speakers or activists. The result is a powerless form of godliness which masks moral decadence and which replaces the presence of the living Christ among His people (II Timothy 3:5).

The main point here is the ministry of the church belongs to Jesus Christ, and to be effective, every believer and congregation must be prepared to come out of the world and its ways in order to be sent back into the world to preach and heal. To be a sent people we must first be a called and gifted people. For a church compromised by the ways of the world will not, indeed, cannot, preach the kingdom of God for *this present world and the Kingdom of God are in opposition to one another*.

One final point: notice also how the disciples were to conduct themselves. They were to take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and to not have two tunics apiece (v.3). The disciples were to travel light; to live in utter dependence upon the provision and protection of the Lord. In modern times, "ministry" can be very profitable, especially evangelistic ministry. But this was not to be the case for Christ's disciples; they were

not to give even the appearance of preaching and healing for fame or money. Instead, they were to lodge in local homes.

In other words, the disciples were to operate within the dignity of ambassadors of the King and his kingdom. If anyone rejected them, they were to “shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them” (v.5). It is a fearful thing to reject the emissaries of Christ. But those who did receive them heard the kingdom of God preached, and seen its power displayed in deliverance and healing of diseases. It is not inadequate funding that limits effective ministry, but inadequate power due to following the world’s ways of doing things. Jesus is with His Church, always, and unto the end of the age, but neither faith nor the Lord will be found in a worldly church.

Summary

Christ came into the world to inaugurate His kingdom and to save and heal. This authority He delegated to those whom He called, gifted, and sent into the world to act as His emissaries. Beginning with the twelve, and then throughout church history, the faithful have continued to preach and heal as Jesus and His apostles did. Ministry does not require the discovery of a mysterious formula. It is simply love and obedience to the Lord Jesus that produces life changing ministry. To preach as He preached, that is to say, to preach the kingdom of God, and to bring deliverance and healing to all who are oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:36-38). But the seduction to adopt worldly ways and values has always been present. Beginning with Constantinian change of 313 A.D., the church has sought refuge from persecution by allying with worldly rulers who ultimately dictate the ways and means of ministry. The result was that the light of the gospel of the kingdom, and the power to make people whole has been eclipsed time and again, just as it is again in our day.

The good news is that there are places in the world unhindered by the state-church model, and/or the business model of the West, and in those places, testimony can be found of the faithful who are still preaching the kingdom of God and ministering deliverance and healing as Christ’s called, gifted, and sent people. What is needed in America is not another evangelistic fad or trendy gimmick, but genuine repentance of alliances with political and social activism, and a return to the simplicity and purity of devotion found among a people who are genuinely called, gifted, and sent as emissaries of the risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN.**

© Rick Peterson, 2020.